DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 080 260 RC 007 191

AUTHOR Fuguitt, Glenn V.; Zuiches, James J.
TITLE Residential Preferences and Population Distribution: Results of a National Survey.
SPONS AGENCY Economic Research Service (DOA), Washington, D.C.; Michigan State Univ., East Lansing.; Wisconsin Univ., Madison.
PUB DATE 24 Aug 73
NOTE 40p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Rural Sociological Society (College Park, Maryland, August 24, 1973)

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.65 HC-$3.29
DESCRIPTORS Adults; Census Figures; Demography; Employment Patterns; Geographic Distribution; *Population Trends; *Relocation; Residence Requirements; *Rural Population; *Rural Urban Differences; Tables (Data); *Urban Population

ABSTRACT

The investigation of residential preference patterns and the implications of these for population distribution among different sizes of communities and between metropolitan and nonmetropolitan settings drew on a sample of the United States noninstitutional adult population, using quotas based on age, sex, and employment. By distinguishing between locations near to and away from large cities, preferences can be compared for proximity to other cities, as well as for size of place preferred. The primary sampling units were Standard Metropolitan Statistical Areas and nonmetropolitan counties stratified by region, age, and race. The respondents' actual residence was compared with their preferred ones. Almost one-half reported living in cities of over 50,000; one-third within 30 miles of such a city; and 20% in more distant locations. If everyone lived where they preferred, however, only one-quarter would live in large cities, and over one-half would be in easy commuting distance of such places. The proportion of those living in more distant areas would remain the same. Characteristics of respondents, their origins, and reasons for preferences were also given. (KM)

FILMED FROM BEST AVAILABLE COPY

ED 080260

RESIDENTIAL PREFERENCES AND POPULATION DISTRIBUTION: RESULTS OF A NATIONAL SURVEY*

RECEIVED SEP 17 1973 NMSU E.R.I.C.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

Glenn V. Fuguitt
University of Wisconsin, Madison

and

James J. Zuiches
Michigan State University, East Lansing

Paper Given at the Annual Meeting of the
Rural Sociological Society
College Park, Maryland
August 24, 1973

RC 007191

RECEIVED
SEP 17 1973
NMSU
E.R.I.C.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

*This work has been supported by the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences, University of Wisconsin, Madison, through a cooperative agreement with the Economic Development Division, Rural Development Service, United States Department of Agriculture; by the Graduate School Research Committee, University of Wisconsin, and by the Agricultural Experiment Station and the College of Social Science, Michigan State University. Analysis was done on the computer of the Center for Demography and Ecology, University of Wisconsin, provided through a grant from the Center for Population Research of the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development.

INTRODUCTION

Studies of population redistribution across space and over time, and of the migration activity that in part determines this process, have often assumed that locational preferences are important in the decision to move and in the choice of a specific residential setting. Little systematic research, however, has focused on the actual preferences of the population, the reasons for these attitudes about residential location, and the consequences of these attitudes for the mobility of individuals or families and for the communities of origin or destination. Unlike the economists' extensive understanding and analyses of a firm's locational requirements, sociologists and demographers have only recently begun to ask questions about the factors that affect individual locational decision-making, whose aggregate effect is seen in the changes in size and composition of communities.

Results of the 1970 Census have shown a continuation of the trends of urbanization and suburbanization in the United States: over two-thirds of the total population now reside in metropolitan areas, and the majority within these areas live outside the central cities in the suburban ring (Bureau of the Census, 1971). Two streams of migration have contributed to this geographic redistribution: first, the movement from agricultural and rural areas to metropolitan areas and large urban centers concentrated the population; and second, the movement from central cities to suburban communities decentralized those within metropolitan areas. Since each stream possessed different socioeconomic and racial characteristics, our society is faced with an array of social concerns--decaying central cities and dying small towns, urban sprawl and rural depopulation, and ethnic,

social and economic disparities between communities. Recognition of these facts and questions about their relation to broader social problems has focused attention on the issue of population distribution and the need for explicit rather than implicit national policies. [See, for example: Ad Hoc Subcommittee on Urban Growth, 1969 and 1970; Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations, 1968; Commission on Population Growth and the American Future, 1972; Fuguitt, 1971; Hansen, 1970; Morrison, 1970; National Goals Research Staff, 1970; President's National Advisory Commission on Rural Poverty, 1967.]

An explicit set of policy recommendations pertaining to distribution has been presented by the Commission on Population Growth and the American Future (1972:144). These include policies on national distribution and migration, guiding urban expansion, and development of depressed rural areas. In part they aim at achieving a balance between metropolitan and nonmetropolitan demographic and economic growth, thereby slowing the process of concentration and decentralization within metropolitan areas.

Various strategies have been suggested to implement the redistribution of population away from metropolitan areas and the retention of population in nonmetropolitan areas, each depending on a combination of economic and noneconomic factors that effect cities, firms, and individuals. If these programs are to be successful, the preferences, desires, and attitudes of the general public should be taken into account concerning migration and population redistribution. Furthermore the background characteristics of potential movers and their households, their educational levels and occupations, age and stage in the family life cycle, race and previous mobility history, must be considered. These will affect their perceptions of the social and economic advantages of their places of residence and potential

destination, the decision to move or not, the choice of a specific residential location within the larger community context, and the composition of places that are their origins and destinations. A policy that provides community and housing options compatible with preferences or previous choices (often inferred as an expression of preferences) could be expected to lessen the discrepancy between the actual and preferred distribution of the population.

That such a discrepancy exists is one argument used by proponents of the various redistribution strategies. Sundquist (1970) argues that the costs and losses of selective migration to communities throughout the national as well as the dissatisfaction of private households with their present distribution patterns provide support for consideration of a national policy. At the level of specific strategies, the coincidence of the public interest and private preference is pointed to as a positive reason for a population dispersal policy since "except for the economic pressures, many city dwellers would eagerly move to the country." (National Goals Research Staff, 1970) In a similar vein, Wingo (1972:18) offers the suggestion that workers trade off amenities for income, and entertains the interesting hypothesis that the higher income levels and productivity of large cities over small is a result of firms "bribing" labor with higher wages to leave smaller (and presumably psychically more satisfying) communities. Similarly, Hansen (1970) can make a persuasive case for growth centers on grounds of a consistency between economies of scale and public preferences for medium or intermediate-size cities (range 10,000 to one million population) rather than those of larger size.

This discrepancy, also, is the paradox of the U.S. population distribution: although more and more persons in national public opinion surveys express dissatisfaction with metropolitan central cities and highly urban-

ized environments, little exodus to medium-sized cities, small towns and rural areas of nonmetropolitan counties has occurred. In fact, during the 1960's about 1300 nonmetropolitan counties experienced such heavy out-migration that they declined in population, although this is less than the 1950's when 1488 nonmetropolitan counties lost population.

This paradox has prompted us to investigate the patterns of household locational choices and residential preferences and the implications of these preferences for the distribution of the population among different size-classes of communities and between metropolitan and nonmetropolitan settings. By making a distinction between locations near and away from large cities, we can compare preferences for proximity to other cities and a metropolitan environment, as well as the size of place preferred, with the actual choice of residential location. Such a comparison will test whether the paradox is real or only an artifact of previous survey questions.

Our initial work was based on a survey of Wisconsin residents. (Zuiches and Fuguitt, 1972) This paper reports on the results of a nationwide sample survey, which allows us to draw conclusions relating to preferences by city size and proximity for the adult population of the continental United States.

PREVIOUS RESEARCH ON RESIDENTIAL PREFERENCES

Little analytical research has been done on the preferences of households for specific sizes of community and degrees of metropolitan proximity and integration. Some general results on preferences by size of community are summarized in Table 1. Because of differences in the questions asked, these distributions are not precisely comparable; yet the findings are similar.

The Gallup polling organization has periodically asked Americans about the region, state or city in which they would like to live. In 1966, Gallup phrased the question: "If you could live anywhere in the U.S. that you wanted to, would you prefer a city, suburban area, small town or farm?" Nearly half (49 percent) of the respondents favored small towns and rural areas. The drawing power of jobs and economic opportunities in large cities, it was theorized, seemed to override the preferences of individuals. Although no differences showed up by age and sex, residence in a city and size of city of residence were positively associated with a choice of an urban rather than a rural setting. Negroes expressed a significant preference for cities or suburbs over the small towns and farms. (American Institute of Public Opinion, 1966)

Hansen (1970) cites a similar Gallup survey in 1968, in which 56 percent of the respondents expressed a preference for rural areas or small towns. He theorized that one factor in this rise from the earlier survey might be "the increasing tensions of life in large urban centers." The same question was asked from 1969 through 1972, with a continuing decline in the proportion preferring to live in a large city, and in the latest study, an increase in those preferring suburban locations. (National Area Development Institute, 1973) These results along with those of other studies, are summarized in Table 1.

In 1969 the National Wildlife Federation sponsored a poll in which interviewers asked, "Which of these kinds of places would you find most pleasant as a place to live? Rural areas, small city, suburbs, mountains, seashore, large city." With this wide range of options, only 24 percent of the American public chose a large city or its suburbs as the most pleasant place to live. Barnett (1970) has analyzed the results of this

survey in terms of a "rural value in American society" and found that nonwhites and central city residents prefer large cities significantly more often than whites or nonurban residents.

A survey including questions on residential preferences was recently carried out by the Commission on Population Growth and the American Future (Mazie and Rawlings, 1972). The distribution of preferences by city size is similar to that reported by Gallup and others. Moreover a positive association was found between the size of community preferred and the socioeconomic status of the respondent as well as the size of childhood residence.

The Commission investigators further inquired about the likelihood of movement to a preferred location and found that about 60 percent of those who preferred another location thought they would eventually move there. This confidence that someday one's preferences will be satisfied raises the question of whose preferences really count and who might be constrained to act on them by social, political and economic factors.

The difficulty encountered in interpreting these studies lies in the lack of any distinction among different size-classes and rural areas by nearness to a large city. Residential location and preference questions focus on the characteristic of the size of an incorporated place or an open rural environment without any attempt to consider the spatial distribution of these places, especially their proximity to one another and to larger places such as a central city of a metropolitan area. This lack of a spatial context for different sized communities has sometimes led to misleading assumptions in interpreting the results, for example, that "larger cities" refers only to central cities over 50,000 population, that suburbs can be equated with the remainder of the Standard Metropolitan Statistical

Area, and that small towns and rural areas are found only in nonmetropolitan counties.

This inadequacy of previous research lead us to modify the residential preference questions we included in a statewide survey of Wisconsin in 1971. After the size of place question, we asked respondents not preferring a large city whether or not they would prefer to live within 30 miles of a large city. Without the modification, our results turned out to be similar to those of Gallup, the Population Commission, and others. The additional question showed that most people preferring smaller places, however, wanted to live near a large city. (See Table 1) If people were to act on their preferences, there would be a decline in the central cities and nonmetropolitan areas of the state, and a growth in the metropolitan rings, not too different from the redistribution now taking place. (Zuiches and Fuguitt, 1972)

A study by Dillman and Dobash (1972) done at about the same time in the State of Washington, also casts doubt on the interpretation of earlier surveys that a high proportion of citizens would prefer to live in small towns and rural areas away from large cities. Their questions were worded in terms of the size of place one would prefer to live in or near, and use as his major trade center. Although a high proportion living in or near cities of 150,000 and over would prefer smaller places, most still preferred places of more than 50,000. The desire for suburban living is shown by the fact that two-thirds said if they were free to choose, they would prefer to live outside the city limits.

QUESTIONS AND SAMPLE

To furnish research results having implications for national distribution policy, the next step was to carry out a nationwide study consider-

ing preferences both in terms of size of place and nearness to a large city. This paper reports the first findings from such a study. We added questions concerning residential preferences to an NORC Amalgam survey of November, 1972. The basic questions were very similar to those included in the Wisconsin 1971 survey. In addition we obtained information on the respondent's view of specific aspects of communities related to his preferences, a ranking of preferred locations, and principal residence when a child. These are analyzed, and associated with various socioeconomic variables, giving particular attention to the relation between actual and preferred residence.

The NORC sample is of the total noninstitutional population of the continental United States, 18 years of age and over. It is a multi-stage area probability sample down to the block level, where quota sampling is used with quotas based on age, sex and employment status. The primary sampling units are Standard Metropolitan Statistical Areas and nonmetropolitan counties stratified by region, age and race before selection. Because of the quota feature, tests of significance are not appropriate.

RESIDENCE AND PREFERENCES

The respondents' actual residence is compared with his preferred residence according to size of place and location with respect to a large city in Table 2. Almost one-half of the respondents report living in cities of over 50,000 population, one-third within 30 miles of a city of 50,000 or more, and 20 percent in more distant locations. If everyone were to live in the location that he preferred, however, the distribution of population would look somewhat different. Thus only one-quarter would live in large cities, and over one-half would be in easy commuting distance of such places. The proportion living more distant, however, would

remain almost the same. The largest drop in percentage, were such a shift to come about, would be for cities over 500,000, and the largest gain would be for rural areas near large cities.

If one combines preferences for cities over 50,000 with those for places over 10,000 but within 30 miles of a larger city as a "large city or suburb" category, results of this study and the Wisconsin survey are not too different from each other or the 1971 Population Commission survey and the 1972 Gallup poll. (See Table 3). The proportion preferring a large city or suburb is lowest for Wisconsin, a state less highly urbanized than the United States as a whole. The preference for living on a farm in the Gallup poll is about 10 percentage points lower than the preference for rural areas in the other studies.

In our United States survey, as in the Wisconsin survey, however, the desire of more than one-half the respondents to live in small towns and rural areas must be interpreted in terms of their response to the additional question on whether they would like this to be within 30 miles of a large city. Table 2 shows that only nine percent of the respondents in the nationwide survey prefer to live in rural areas more than 30 miles from a large city, and another nine in small and medium sized towns similarly located. Comparable percentages for Wisconsin are 14 and 16. Although the rural value pervades residential preferences, the fact that this occurs without disengagement from the metropolitan complex suggests a clear desire to have the best of both environments--proximity to employment, quality services, schools and facilities usually associated with an urban metropolis, along with the smaller local residential community for familial and neighborhood activities.

A complete cross-classification of respondents by their reported cur-

rent and preferred residence is given in Table 4. The percentages in the principal diagonal represent those respondents satisfied with both the size of their community and its location. Together, this includes 623, or 42 percent of the 1481 persons interviewed, who would not have to move to realize their preferences. In only two residence categories, places under 10,000, and rural areas, both within 30 miles of a large city, did the preference and current residence of more than one-half of the respondents coincide. For communities within the metropolitan zone of 30 miles, there is also a systematic inverse relationship between size of residence and satisfaction with this residence. Only 36 percent of the residents in cities over 500,000 selected this type as their preferred location, but 67 percent of near (less than 30 miles) rural residents selected near rural areas as preferred. The least "popular" locations, as measured here, are large cities, and medium and small towns away from a large center. Diagonal values for these residence types are 36, 35 and 21. This was true also for the Wisconsin study, with diagonals of 28, 22, and 33.

Most of the differences between actual residence and preferences indicated a desire for smaller and/or more remote locations. About 40 percent of the responses are above and to the right of the diagonal, and only 17 percent below and to the left. Overall, however, the data show the predominance of suburban and fringe type locations in residential preferences. These are the categories with the highest agreement between residence and preferences, and the categories most preferred by people currently living elsewhere.

This is shown clearly by combining the categories of residence and preference into three groups: cities over 50,000; smaller places and rural areas near large cities, and smaller places and rural areas away from large

cities. Of people currently living in large cities over 50,000, 52 percent would prefer smaller places. Conversely, of people not currently living in large cities, eight percent would prefer to do so. More than three-fourths of those living in smaller places near large cities would prefer to remain in this type of location, as would 42 percent of those not now living there. Finally, of those living more than 30 miles from a large city, over one-half preferred living nearer. In contrast, only 13 percent of the people living within 30 miles of a large city or in a large city chose a more remote location. To the extent that people would find it possible to act on their expressed preferences, then, one would predict an increase in the population of small towns and rural areas near large cities, a decline in large cities, and a stability in remote rural areas.

Table 5 is the cross classification of current and preferred residence using this trichotomy of residence types.[1] The remainder of the analysis reported here is based on data grouped in this way.

Origins and Residential Preferences

We are a nation of movers, and many of the people expressing preferences in our survey grew up or formerly lived in locations other than their current residence. One would expect these experiences to have an effect on the residential preferences of individual respondents. Moreover, comparing the distribution of respondents by place of origin with the distribution by current residence relfects past trends in population change among the residence types, just as the comparison of current locations with preferences suggests potential future trends.

Respondents were asked to report the size and location of the place their parents lived when they were born. The distribution by preferred residence, current residence, and origin for the three location types are

given in Table 6. Comparison of origin with current residence indicates the movement out of more remote areas into big cities and their peripheries over the last generation. Were the preferred residences realized, there would be a reverse shift back out of cities so the proportion of residents would be less than the proportion born there, whereas the periphery of large cities would continue to capture an increasing proportionate share.

This indication of an aggregate shift into big cities and their peripheries between birth and current residence, followed by the potential of a movement out of big cities, suggests that there may be some tendency for people to wish to return to their place of origin. Yet we have seen that current residence is intself strongly associated with preference. Table 7 has been prepared to show the relationship between preferences and both current residence and origin. Each cell gives the percent of people in the current residence and origin indicated, who prefer the residence type indicated by the column heading. By comparing the first two rows and the third and fourth rows we can see the effect of origin separately for the two current residence possibilities. These differences are all consistent in direction and similar in size. The next to the last line of the table gives the average origin difference over the two current residence groupings, values ranging from 7 to 12 percentage points. The last line gives corresponding average differences between groups similar in origin but different in current residence, (line 1 compared with 3, and 2 compared with 4). These values are also consistent, and about three times the size of the average origin differences. Thus current residence has an important effect, in that people who live in an area are more likely to prefer it than people who do not, regardless of origin. But place of origin, representing an influence which may be more remote in time, also

has a smaller but consistent effect on people's preferences, for those preferring to live in a big city, near a big city, or farther away.

Characteristics of Respondents and Preferences

To understand better the differences found between current locations and residential preferences we have associated these variables with some socioeconomic characteristics of the respondents. The difference between a current location and a preferred location may be thought of as analgous to a migration stream, as it represents the movement that would take place were respondents to realize their preferences. We have dichotomised each of six characteristics and show the proportion of those on one side of a dichotomy as the cells of Table 8. In this way it is possible to compare, for example, the proportion with a high school education of those who live in the big city but want to live in a small town or rural area away from the big city, with the proportion for those currently living and preferring to live in the big city ("area of origin") as well as for those currently living and preferring to live away from the big city ("area of destination"). In addition, by comparing the marginal column with the marginal row, one can contrast the distribution of a socioeconomic variable by present residence with that which would result if persons moved to their preferred place of residence.

The first three variables considered might be termed demographic--percent female, percent over 40, and percent married. According to Table 8 the potential stream to more rural and remote areas would have a higher proportion of women than those living in and preferring these areas, but the stream would be slightly more masculine than the big city "area of origin." Potential movement to big city or near locations is generally selective of females, particularly the shift from remote locations to

small cities and rural areas near large cities.

Younger people under 40 predominate in both the potential movement toward rural and remote locations, and that in the opposite direction toward big cities. Persons wishing to move out of big cities, however, do tend to be older than persons wishing to move into big cities, as we found in the Wisconsin survey, and older persons show a greater stability in rural areas than in more urban contexts.

Perons wishing to move from big cities or from near big cities to more remote locations are more likely to be married than those wishing to move in the opposite direction. The latter streams toward more urban settings have lower proportions married than the corresponding groups at "origin" or potential "destination."

Two previous studies have concluded that the potential movement from big cities to smaller towns and rural areas, or from metropolitan to non-metropolitan locations, is selective of persons of lower socioeconomic status, and that those preferring big cities or metropolitan areas who currently live in more rural settings tend to be persons of higher socio-economic status. (Dillman and Dobash, 1972, Zuiches and Fuguitt, 1972) Other studies have associated preferences with socioeconomic status without regard to current location and found preferences for a more urban setting to be more prevalent among those having higher SES and preferences for a more rural setting to be identified with those having lower SES (Lee, et. al, 1971, Mazie and Rawlings, 1972). Our analysis here is more detailed than others in comparing nine different residence-preference groupings, and considering both origins and destinations, although this is at the expense of the SES variables which are dichotomised.

Table 8 (top right hand panel) shows that persons living in a big

city and preferring to live more than 30 miles from such a place have a somewhat higher proportion completing high school than their counterparts who are satisfied with big city life, and a considerably higher proportion than do those living in and preferring the more remote location. Similarly persons living in remote areas who prefer the big city are more likely to have a high school education than those living in and preferring the "origin" and to a somewhat lesser extent, than those in the "destination". Persons in remote areas preferring to live closer but not in the big city, however, were less likely to have a high school education than comparable "origin" and "destination" groupings.

With regard to occupational status, the second right hand panel of the table shows that those living in a big city but preferring to live in smaller places are together less likely to have a household head with a white collar occupation than persons preferring to remain in the more urban setting, but more likely to be associated with a white collar occupation than those at the areas of preferred "destination." Conversely, respondents preferring the big city are more likely to be white collar than those wanting to remain in remote locations, but less likely than those living in and preferring this area of destination. Again the exception is the "stream" from remote to near a big city which has a lower white collar proportion than those living in and preferring either the remote or the near location.

Finally, the results for income shows respondents stating a preference for a more rural location to be about the same as those preferring and living in the area of origin, but considerably above the corresponding groups in the area of destination. Similarly those preferring to live in more urban locations are more likely to have higher incomes than those preferring to remain in remote areas but generally less likely to have higher

incomes than those in and preferring the areas of "destination."

In sum, the SES differentials show in general that potential movement away from, and toward, remote areas consists of people who tend to have higher status than those wishing to remain in these remote areas. In comparison with those wishing to remain in the big city potential movement in or out is somewhat higher in educational status, but may be lower in occupational and income status.

Comparing the two marginals of these six subtables gives an idea of the aggregate consequences of the possible shifts for the distribution of the demographic and status variables by residence. Were people to act on their preferences, the percent of high school graduates would go up in remote locations, as would the percent white collar, and the percent with family income over $10,000. Thus the movement in of persons with higher status relative to those who wish to remain in remote locations outweighs in magnitude the stream of those who would move from remote to urban settings. The high school graduate and income proportions for small cities and rural areas near large cities would decline slightly, because of the movement of relatively lower status persons from remote to adjacent locations. The unusually high proportion of women in this stream led us to do a separate analysis by sex, and we found that this difference was more pronounced for women than men. Overall, however, considering each sex separately leads to substantially the same conclusions we have reached in this analysis of stream differentials.

Reasons for Preferences

After stating their preference for a community size and location, respondents were read a list of reasons people might have for preferring to live in one kind of community or other, and asked whether or not each

was one of their reasons. The percent of people reporting each reason was tabulated by the three location types and graphed in Figure 1. In order to clarify the distinction between locations the reasons were ordered by the percent of people reporting them who preferred to live away from a big city. These ranged from 13 for higher wages to 89 for less crime and danger.

This ordering gives a clear discrimination between big city and other preferences. Those preferring small towns and rural areas near big cities, have almost the same pattern of response as persons preferring more remote locations. The people who want to live near big cities appear to be seeking the same qualities for their communities as those preferring to live farther away.

Big city responses are more uniform than the others with between 64 and 80 percent of the respondents stating that the following were factors in their choice: higher wages or salaries, better job opportunities, the possibility of contacts with a variety of people, better schools, nearness to family or friends, and recreation or cultural facilities there.

A lower proportion of the respondents favoring more rural settings mentioned each of these six reasons. The greatest difference is for the first two, with only about 20 percent of those preferring small towns and rural areas reporting that better job opportunities or higher wages were reasons. Thus hardly anyone preferring more rural locations reported that he did so because of economic opportunities there.

The four reasons at the top of the graph were mentioned more frequently by those desiring more rural locations, and they are often expressed as disadvantages of big city living. The difference between remote and big city in the proportion mentioning less crime and danger is almost as large

as the differences in the opposite direction for the two job queries at the bottom of the graph.

The analysis of reasons was elaborated by controlling for present location. Present location made little difference, however, in comparison to the differences between preferences for big city and more rural-like areas. The people wanting to move to an area thus respond in terms of the same qualities as those already there who wish to remain.

Tables of reasons also were constructed separately by categories of age, income, and sex, but differences were small and not systematic. Perhaps people are simply responding to generally recognized stereotypes concerning the types of residences they prefer. The fact that over 40 percent of those preferring big cities said this was because there was less crime and danger there, and better quality of air and water, suggest that many respondents were simply assenting to factors one would consider desirable in any community. Nevertheless systematic differences did emerge between those preferring big cities and those preferring other locations. A thorough analysis of possible reasons would require considerably more interview time than was available to us, for detailed questions tailored to specific preferences.

The Ranking of Preferences

This survey showed a strong preference for small towns and rural areas near large cities, as did the earlier survey in Wisconsin. This leaves unanswered, however, whether the basic preference is for the metropolitan area, with the smaller city or open country therein viewed as a more pleasant living alternative, or whether basic preference is for rural areas with the choice of location within 30 miles of a big city simply an attempt to obtain some urban advantages in addition. In an effort to ferret

out this somewhat subtle distinction, we asked respondents to rank in order of preference three types of location: a city over 50,000, a smaller city or rural area within 30 miles of a city over 50,000, and a smaller city or rural area more than 30 miles from a city over 50,000. The results are given in Table 9 for persons classified by current residence. One sees the expected association between current residence and first preference. What is significant, however, is that whereas 43 percent of the respondents rank a near location first and a more rural location second, only 12 percent rank a near location first and a big city second. In all only 32 percent rank the big city either first or second, and conversely 68 percent of the respondents make it their third choice out of three as a place to live.

It is also noteworthy that first rank choices to these questions do not correspond completely with the classification of responses to the two basic residential preference questions. One-fourth of the respondents were classified as preferring a big city, but 19 percent ranked this type of residence first; 55 percent preferred a near location and 56 percent ranked it first, and 20 percent preferred a more remote residence, but 26 percent ranked that first. Most of the differences were due to people classed as preferring a big city according to their responses to the preference questions, but ranking a near location first, and people who were classed as preferring a near location who ranked the location away from big cities as first. No doubt this is in part unreliability as people are asked to respond to separate more or less hypothetical questions. But they are different questions. The basic preference three-fold distinction was derived from a more detailed question on size of place and a second question on distance. The shift in preferences toward more rural

locations may be partly a result of responding in the second case to a set of three clear-cut alternatives. Also the ranking question was asked at the end of the section, after questions on reasons for preferences and other questions sensitizing respondents to issues of residential location, and this may have led some to give a more rural response after reflection. We plan further work to try to explain discrepancies between these preference questions.[2]

DISCUSSION

Previous survey data on residential preferences may have considerably overestimated the preferences for nonmetropolitan rural environments. In fact, when we compare in Table 1 the preferences for size of place alone, we find that in eight out of nine surveys carried out since 1948, the community size-class least preferred is the large city, and in all nine surveys the most preferred community size-class is either the smaller cities and towns or rural areas. Without the distinction of proximity to central cities, the interpretation of this NORC nationwide survey and the earlier Wisconsin survey would be the same as the other surveys, according to Table 3. By allowing respondents to express a preference for the degree of proximity to a large city of 50,000 population, we found that they favored the areas that have gained in the historical pattern of population concentration and decentralization, and that there is a consistency between actual and preferred location that has been overlooked.

Thus the results of the Wisconsin survey were not unique, but have been confirmed by our nationwide survey. In the nation, we found a higher proportion of respondents living in and preferring to live in large cities, and a lower proportion living in and preferring to live in areas more than 30 miles from a large city. This is completely congruent with the influ-

ence of present residence upon preferences insofar as Wisconsin had a lower proportion of its population in central cities and a higher proportion in rural areas. The pattern of association b tween actual and preferred residences are very similar for the two studies, and both show the preponderance of preferences for living in small towns and rural areas but near a large city.

When a spatial component is specified as well as a size component, the whole argument of public preferences supporting strategies of population dispersal into nonmetropolitan areas becomes questionable. When one considers growth center policy concentrating on medium size cities away from the metropolis, enthusiasm must be tempered by the fact that, in the nation, as in Wisconsin, this is the least popular size of community.

Nevertheless, the attachment which many people feel for rural areas and small towns was apparent in this study. Current residence is highly associated with preferred residence, but we also found a small but consistent association between preferences and place of origin, and a high proportion of these respondents were born outside the big city. (As Mazie and Rawlings point out, however, place of origin may have an aggregate influence on preferences in the other direction for later generations disproportionately born in large cities).

The reasons given for choosing small towns and rural areas frequently included commonly held advantages of rural life even for those preferring to live within 30 miles of a large city. This, coupled with the responses to the ranking question which showed two-thirds of the respondents ranked big cities the least desirable as places to live, indicates that a favorable orientation to rural and small-town life, in contrast to life in the big

city, underlies the preferences of most respondents, including those wishing to live a short distance from a metropolitan center.

From the analysis of preferences as indicators of potential mobility, the redistribution would generally improve the compositional mix of nonmetropolitan communities. Beale (1972:676) points out that as of 1967, twenty percent of the adult rural nonmetropolitan population was of urban origin, younger and of a higher occupational status than the remainder. If preferences were satisfied, a further increase in higher status (high school graduates, white collar occupations, higher income characteristics) as well as the young and married population would occur. On balance, the satisfaction of preferences would seem to be beneficial for nonmetropolitan areas.

We have seen that the net effect of these potential streams would be to further increase the population near metropolitan centers, consistent with recent trends. The paradox is that if persons move to locations peripheral to large cities in order to obtain rural qualities of life, they will ultimately be thwarted in their desires, as more and more people join them. The unanswered question is why people wish to remain near a large city. Undoubtedly economic considerations are important: only one person in five preferring a more rural location--even within 30 miles of a big city--reported doing so for better job opportunities. But we need to know more about the nature of this advantage as perceived by individuals, and more about the other advantages which seem to come with a location near to a metropolitan center. If one had information about the characteristics that so many respondents consider essential but believe are available only closer to a larger city, one could begin to determine their relative impact on preferences, the decision to move, and the choice of a new residential

location. Such knowledge is essential in formulating and attempting to implement population distribution policies on the national or local level.

Table 1. A Comparison of Surveys of Residential Preferences in the United States from 1948 to 1972.

	Roper 1948	National Wildlife Federation 1969	Gallup 1966	Gallup 1968	Gallup 1970	Gallup 1972	Population Commission 1971	Wisconsin Survey 1971	Within 30 miles	Beyond 30 miles
Large Cities	15	6	22	18	18	13	14[¢]	10		
Suburbs	20	18	28	25	26	31	22[¢]	12		
Smaller Cities & Towns	41[*]	25	31	29	31	32	30	44[$]	28[$]	16[$]
Rural Areas	24	54[#]	18[@]	27[@]	24[@]	23[@]	34	35	21	14
No Opinion	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	0		
Total	100	104	100	100	100	100	100	101		

[*] Includes respondents preferring small cities and small towns. The Roper Study permitted five possible choices.

[#] Includes respondents preferring rural areas (30%), mountains (15%) and seashore (9%). National Wildlife Federation Survey permitted multiple responses and had six possible choices.

[@] Gallup used "farm" instead of "rural area."

[¢] Population Commission Survey used "larger city or suburb" and "medium city or suburb."

[$] Includes respondents preferring medium-size cities (18%:12% within 30 miles and 6% beyond) and small cities or towns (26%:16% within 30 miles and 10% beyond). Wisconsin Survey had five possible choices.

Sources: 1948 Roper Study cited by Everett S. Lee, et al. An Introduction to Decentralization Research, Oak Ridge National Laboratory, Department of Housing and Urban Development, Number 3, 1971, page 33.

1966, 1968, 1970 Gallup Opinion Index, March 1970, Report #57.

1969 National Wildlife Federation, 1969. op. cit., page 5.

1971 Report of the Commission on Population Growth and the American Future, 1972, Part 1, Chapter 2.

1972 Gallup result reported in Area Development Interchange. January 1973.

Table 2. Actual and Preferred Residence of Respondents by Size of Place and Location with Respect to a Large City, NORC Sample of the United States, 1972

Type of Location	Current Residence	Preferred Residence
City over 500,000	20	9
City 50,000 to 500,000	24	16
Subtotal	44	25
Within 30 miles of city over 50,000		
City 10,000 to 50,000	13	16
Places under 10,000	10	15
Rural area	11	24
Subtotal	34	55
More than 30 miles of city over 50,000		
City 10,000 to 50,000	6	6
Places under 10,000	6	4
Rural area	9	9
Subtotal	21	19
Not ascertained	1	1
TOTAL	100	100
(Number of cases)	(1481)	(1481)

Table 3. Comparison of Recent Surveys with NORC Sample of the United States, 1972

	1971 Population Commission	1972 Gallup	1971 Wisconsin Survey	1972 NORC Sample
Large city or suburb	36	44	34*	41*
Small city and town	30	32	32	25
Rural area	34	23**	35	33
Not ascertained	0	1	0	1
Total	100	100	100	100

*Includes preference for places 10,000 to 50,000 within 30 miles of a city over 50,000.

**Question asked preference for farm rather than rural area.

Table 4. Preferred Residence by Current Residence, NORC Sample of the United States, 1972*

Current Residence	Preferred Residence: City over 500,000	City 50,000 to 500,000	Within 30 mi. of city over 50,000: City 10,000 to 50,000	Within 30 mi. of city over 50,000: Place under 10,000	Within 30 mi. of city over 50,000: Rural area	More than 30 mi. from city over 50,000: City 10,000 to 50,000	More than 30 mi. from city over 50,000: Place under 10,000	More than 30 mi. from city over 50,000: Rural area	Not Ascertained	Total
City over 500,000	36	15	14	12	11	3	4	5	0	100 (N=291)
City 50,000 to 500,000	4	41	17	8	20	6	2	2	0	100 (N=353)
Within 30 mi. of city over 50,000										
City 10,000 to 50,000	3	7	43	13	14	7	3	8	2	100 (N=194)
Places under 10,000	2	4	10	51	23	1	6	3	0	100 (N=151)
Rural Area	1	3	7	4	67	1	2	14	1	100 (N=159)
More than 30 miles from city over 50,000										
City 10,000 to 50,000	5	16	15	3	11	35	7	8	0	100 (N=88)
Place under 10,000	0	7	4	27	21	6	21	14	0	100 (N=94)
Rural Area	2	1	1	9	37	1	2	45	2	100 (N=126)

*This table excludes 25 respondents who did not answer the question on current residence.

Table 5

Preferred Residence by Current Residence Trichotomised, NORC Sample of the United States, 1972*

Current	(N)	Preferred: City over 50,000	Other, LT30 miles from city	Other, 30+ miles from city	Total
City over 50,000	(641)	48	41	11	100
Other LT 30 miles from city	(500)	7	78	15	100
Other 30+ miles from city	(306)	9	44	47	100
Total	(1447)	25	55	20	100

*34 cases were dropped due to "don't know" or "no response" to the preference or the residence question.

Table 6

Proportion of Respondents Born in, Living in, and Preferring a Residence Type*

	City over 50,000	Other, LT 30 miles from city	Other, 30+ miles from city	Total
Residence of parents when born	30	30	40	100
Current residence	44	35	21	100
Preferred residence	25	55	20	100

*N=1380 respondents who answered these three questions.

Table 7

Percent of Respondents Preferring a Residence Type by Current Residence and Residence of Birth, NORC Sample of the United States, 1972.

	Residence Types		
	Big City	Near	Away
	Value in each cell is percent of respondents preferring this residence type		
Current residence:			
In area indicated			
Origin:			
In area	57	82	49
Not in area	40	74	41
Current residence:			
Not in area indicated			
Origin:			
In area	14	53	16
Not in area	6	39	11
Average differences:			
Origin effect	12	11	7
Current residence effect	39	32	30

Table 8

Characteristics of Respondents by Current and Preferred Residence
NORC Sample of the United States, 1972

Current Residence	Preferred Residence: Big City	Near	Away	Total	Preferred Residence: Big City	Near	Away	Total
	Percent Female				Percent High School Graduate			
Big city	52	56	47	53	64	63	73	65
Near	53	54	44	52	65	61	68	62
Away	49	63	42	52	85	52	52	55
Total	52	56	44	53	66	60	61	62
	Percent Over 40				Percent Household Head White Collar			
Big city	59	48	48	53	53	43	54	49
Near	38	60	42	56	45	40	36	40
Away	37	55	65	58	44	30	32	33
Total	56	55	54	56	51	40	39	42
	Percent Married				Percent Income Over $10,000			
Big city	67	66	69	67	49	45	50	48
Near	56	77	79	76	43	50	51	50
Away	59	74	71	71	50	37	27	33
Total	65	73	73	72	48	46	39	46

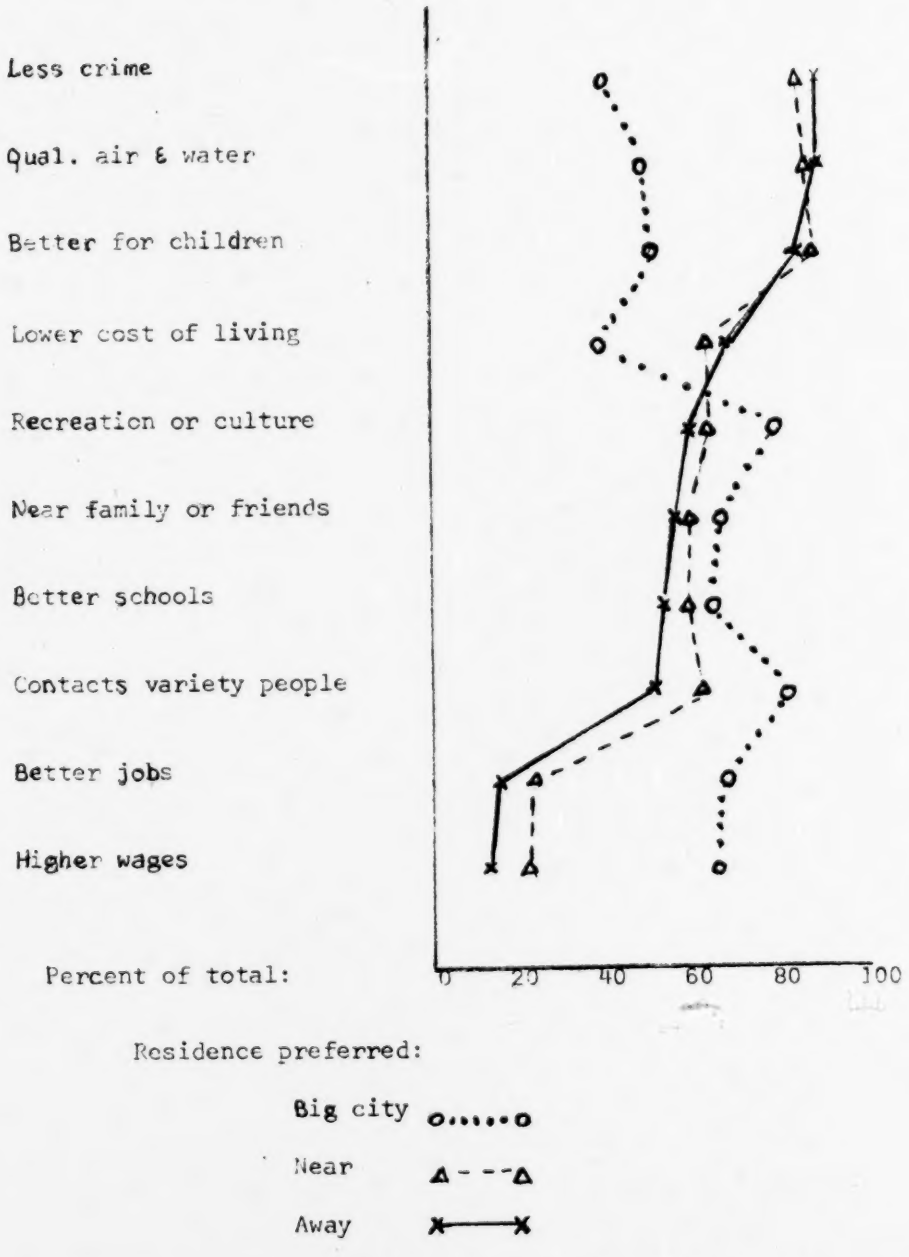
Table 9

Distribution of Respondents by Preference Ranking of Residence Types and Current Residence, NORC Sample of the United States, 1972

	Preference Ranking						
Big city	1	1	2	3	2	3	
Near	2	3	1	1	3	2	Total (N)
Away	3	2	3	2	1	1	
Current residence:							
Big city	33	4	17	32	1	13	100 (637)
Near	4	1	9	60	1	25	100 (500)
Away	3	-	5	42	0	50	100 (302)
All respondents:	17	2	12	43	1	25	100 (1439)

Figure 1

Proportion of Respondents Stating a Reason is Important in their Residential Preference, by Type of Preference, NORC Sample of the United States, 1972



Reasons have been ordered by increasing proportion of mention by respondents who prefer an "away" location.

FOOTNOTES

[1]To get an impression of how accurately respondents could determine whether or not they live within 30 miles of a city over 50,000, the sample Segments, usually minor civil divisions, were classified by distance edge-to-edge to places of that size. We found that 64 respondents reported being within 30 miles of a large city that were in sample Segments more than 40 miles from such a place, and 23 respondents that were in Segments less than 20 miles from a large city who reported living more than 30 miles away. In all these 87 were less than 6 percent of the total number interviewed, so we concluded that estimating distance is not a serious problem.

[2]The fact that the ranking of locations was, in effect, a second test of the satisfaction with ones community, and revealed a further net shift to small cities and rural areas near large cities, prompted us to consider the characteristics of respondents and potential streams of mobility on the basis of the first ranked location and present residence. In general, the relationships were the same as described for Table 8.

REFERENCES

Ad hoc Subcommittee on Urban Growth

1969 Population Trends. Hearings for use of the Committee on Banking and Currency, House of Representatives, Washington, D.C.

1970 Industrial Location Policy. Hearings for the use of the Committee on Banking and Currency, House of Representatives, Washington, D.C.

Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations

1970 Urban and Rural America: Policies for Future Growth. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, Report A-32, 1968.

American Institute of Public Opinion

1966 "Small town America still has great appeal." Gallup Poll News Release, Princeton, N.J.

Barnett, Larry D.

1970 "The rural value in American society." Unpublished manuscript.

Beale, Calvin L.

1972 "Rural and Nonmetropolitan Population Trends of Significance to National Population Policy." PP. 665-678 in U. S. Commission of Population Growth and the American Future, Population, Distribution, and Policy. Sara Mills Mazie, ed. Vol. V of Commission research reports. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1972.

Bureau of the Census, United States

1971 United States Summary, Final Report: General Demographic Trends for Metropolitan Areas, 1960 and 1970. PHC(2)-1 Washington, D.C.: U. S. Government Printing Office.

Commission on Population Growth and the American Future

1972 Population and the American Future. The Report of the Commission on Population Growth and the American Future. Washington, D.C.: U. S. Government Printing Office.

Dillman, Don A. and Russell P. Dobash

1972 Preferences for Community Living and Their Implications for Population Redistribution. Washington Agricultural Experiment Station, Bulletin 764. Pullman: Washington State University.

Fuguitt, Glenn V.

1971 "The places left behind: population trends and policy for rural America." Rural Sociology 36 (December):449-470.

Hansen, Niles M.

1970 Rural Poverty and the Urban Crisis. Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1970.

Lee, Everett S., J. C. Bresee, K. P. Nelson, and D. A. Petterson

1971 An Introduction to Urban Decentralization Research. Department of Housing and Urban Development ORNL-HUD-3. Oak Ridge, Tennessee: Oak Ridge National Laboratory.

Mazie, Sara Mills and Steve Rawlings

1972 "Public attitude toward population distribution issues." Pp. 599-616 in U.S. Commission on Population Growth and the American Future, Population, Distribution, and Policy, Sara Mills Mazie, ed. Vol. V of Commission research reports. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1972.

Morrison, Peter A.

1970 "The rationale for a policy on population distribution." Santa Monica: The RAND Corporation, P4374.

National Area Development Institute

1973 "Public opinion favors nonmetro areas." Area Development Interchange 3 (1 January):1 ff.

National Goals Research Staff

1970 Toward Balanced Growth: Quantity and Quality. Washington, D.C.: U. S. Government Printing Office.

National Wildlife Federation

1969 "The U.S. public considers its environment." A National Opinion Trends Report. Princeton, N.J.: The Gallup Organization, Inc.

President's National Advisory Commission on Rural Poverty

1967 The People Left Behind. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office.

Sundquist, James L.

1970 "Where shall they live?" The Public Interest, 18 (Winter): 88-100.

Wingo, Lowden

1972 "Issues in a national urban development strategy for the United States." Urban Studies 9:3-27.

Zuiches, James J. and Glenn V. Fuguitt

1972 "Residential preferences: implications for population redistribution in nonmetropolitan areas." Pp. 617-630 in U.S. Commission on Population Growth and the American Future, Population, Distribution, and Policy. Sara Mills Mazie, ed. Vol. V of Commission research reports. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1972.